

# Hermes

BY THE STUDENTS OF WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY IN MIDDLETON, CONNECTICUT

WED., DEC. 16, 1981

HAPPY  
Winter  
Solstice



Season's Greetings

# HERMES, BELIEVE IT OR DON'T!

## Believe It or Don't

Salvadoran Army officials complain that their war against subversivos has "no front"...A Honduran fisherman...found in his nets a small boy's body with a bullet in the head, another innocent lost in a war with no fronts and no frontiers.

NEWSWEEK, Nov. 30, 1981

—Sound familiar? Although the U.S. Army is little more prepared to fight a guerrilla war today than in the past, Ronald Reagan continues to suggest that we intervene more forcefully and more directly in El Salvador. Like the Vietnam soldier, you too will spray entire towns with machine-gun fire, trying unsuccessfully to "neutralize" the enemy. Only this time, you'll be able to come home on weekends.



## BELIEVE IT OR DON'T:

A sweeping new offense which targets anti-nuclear activists and utility reformers for special investigation and prosecution is contained in the latest attempt for comprehensive revision of the criminal code—Senate Bill 1630. Section 1702 of the proposed code would make it a federal crime to damage property at a nuclear facility, or any energy production or distribution facility. Because the proposed code also broadens the offenses of solicitation, conspiracy and attempt, the planning or organizing of anti-nuclear demonstrations that result in violence or damage to property might be covered under the section. For example, some experts feel that under S. 1630 anti-nuclear protesters recently apprehended at Diablo Canyon for violating California's misdemeanor trespass statutes could have been arrested under federal laws and charged with a felony. A conviction would call for sentences of up to six years and fines to individuals of up to \$250,000 and up to \$1,000,000 for organizations.

—news release from the

Campaign for Political Rights



## Believe It or Don't

Collectively, the economic advisers to Ronald Reagan, a conservative President, told their colleagues that budget deficits are not necessarily inflationary, don't "crowd out" private investment, don't by themselves drive up interest rates and may not even add to the size of the national debt in "real" terms, after adjustment for inflation.

—The New York Times, Dec. 9, 1981

It would appear that all the budget cuts were for nought! Like their boss, the President's advisors are "political chameleons."



## BELIEVE IT OR DON'T:

The United Mine Workers union, other mine-safety partisans and Congressional overseers of the Federal Mine Safety and Health Administration charge that the Reagan Administration's budget cuts are related to the nearly 8 percent increase in mine deaths so far this year over the 1980 total, with two working weeks still to go in 1981.

"To reduce the inspectorate by 10 percent when fatal accidents are up 8 percent represents the kind of cold-blooded illogic that only David Stockman could endorse...[wrote a local citizen's group to their Kentucky Representative, Carl Perkins].

—The New York Times, December 10, 1981

The current administration's efforts to demonstrate its commitment to labor can only be topped by the President's recent acceptance of former air traffic controllers back into federal agencies other than the Aviation Administration. "There is another principle we honor in America," said Reagan, "the tradition that individuals deserve to be treated with compassion." This past year, 143 have died in coal mines, 36,000 are homeless in New York City.



## Believe it or Don't:

Who deployed tactical nuclear arms first? We did. The Honest Johns and Corporal missiles and the 280-mm. artillery gun came into NATO service in 1953. It was not until 1957 that the Russians introduced their first tactical nuclear weapon, the SS-1B Scud missile, in the Warsaw Pact...

Do we need to increase our conventional forces in Europe? No. At this moment, 64 NATO divisions with 2.8 million troops face 68 Warsaw Pact divisions with 2.6 million. It is a stalemate...

—Tom Gervasi, The New York Times, December 3, 1981

Like the budget cuts on the domestic front, the military outlays on the foreign front seem increasingly pointless—whether or not you support a beefed-up U.S. defense establishment. The program for the B-1 bomber, for instance, at a cost of \$40 billion, would close for three years the "window of vulnerability"—a window that has mysteriously closed since the Administration took office, prompting the fizzling out of a variety of elaborate MX deployment programs. Like the budget cuts, the MX was "critical" just a few months ago. Now it's mysteriously on the far back burner where the B-1 should be. After all, B-52's would fire ALCMs (cruise missiles) as effectively as B-1s.

# letters

Ronald Reagan, President of the United States of America  
 Thomas K. Turnage, Director Selective Service System  
 Caspar W. Weinberger, Secretary of War  
 William French Smith, Attorney General  
 Sam Gejdenson, Connecticut Representative in Congress  
 Christopher Dodd, United States Senator from Connecticut  
 Lowell Weicker, United States Senator from Connecticut  
 Michael D. Barnes, Maryland Representative in Congress  
 Charles Mathias, United States Senator from Maryland  
 Paul Sarbanes, United States Senator from Maryland.

**Friends:**

I am writing to inform you that although legally required to do so I have failed to register with the Selective Service System. I have counselled others to refuse registration, and I shall continue to urge resistance to all war and to all preparation for war.

It has always been young men such as myself who have done the killing and the dirty work that the government leaders have directed. It could have been me who nailed Jesus to the cross, who ran the ovens at Dachau, who bombed Dresden, and then Hiroshima. It is men like me all over the world who are training to kill, to die, at the order of their governments.

You claim to want peace, as do the governments and armies of Russia, of Israel, of the Palestinians, of the West and the East-Germans; and yet you would have me march to kill not only the soldiers but the women and the old men and the children—children laughing and crying and growing up some of them to be soldiers themselves. It is the tragedy and the joke of your wars that we go to rape and burn in the 'enemy' country those who we would protect in our own homes.

You ask sometimes if I would have fought Hitler, but nobody fought Hitler. The soldiers killed each other in a thousand battles and they burned each other's cities so there was no one to come home to and I have never heard that a single bomb was ever used to stop the trains into Auschwitz. Six million rode those trains and died, killed by executioners only following orders. But of the people running the trains, working in kitchens and factories, paying taxes, who ever stopped to ask 'why'? Nobody on either side fought Hitler—they only followed orders.

I say 'enough'! I refuse to kill. I will not cooperate with you in your murderous business from which some profit while others die. I will not compete with you in violence by turning guns and threats of destruction against you. I am an anarchist and a pacifist and I think little good can ever come of your orders and your wars—beliefs I hold as a free person but which it is not 'legal' to act upon. I am not trying to tear down or overthrow the political system of the United States. I am trying to live my life in harmony with my spiritual, ethical, and political beliefs—to act out of my love, respect, and responsibility for humanity and the living planet which is my home. I regret that this has brought me in conflict with the government of my country, but I cannot comply with the dictates of that government while still seeking to serve the cause of life on earth.

Should you wish to contact me I can be reached through the address below.

69 High Street (Ecology House)  
 Middletown, Conn. 06457  
 (203) 347-4048

Russell F. Ford

Why did I write the above letter, opening myself to prosecution/persecution? Despite all the agitating and protesting we may do, men are required to register themselves with the government on turning 18. Some one million of us have not taken this first step in giving ourselves over to the likes of Wm. Westmoreland. A few of us have felt we had to do more—had to defy this wrong, had to deny it openly, challenging the men who make and enforce laws. We are denying not just this one small rule that affects us personally, but the right of those men to make and perpetuate war.

We are moved by fear of nuclear war that would end war and everything else with it. We are moved by rage over the oppression of our minds and spirits, and the destruction of lives, of which war is but the most blatant expression. And we realize that in fighting against these things in public, in the courts where they will call us criminals, and in the prisons where they will try to silence us, we are fighting against the oppression in ourselves that is part of our inheritance as sons of this culture.

This is our attempt to leave the world a little better place than we found it.

For more information on war, registration and the alternatives, call me. I'll answer your questions or find someone else who can. Russ Ford, 347-4048; 69 High Street (Ecology House).

An open letter to John Ely and the Hermes staff

I am writing to demand that you print this letter in Hermes and follow it with an apology for your disrespectful and irresponsible behavior toward me.

You will recall that I agreed to an interview with you on the subject of the October conference in New York on Hannah Arendt. I sat one condition that you allow me to review the transcript before publication and make what changes I wanted for the sake of clarity. You gave me the transcript, I took several hours out of an extremely busy day to work on it, and then by telephone I made an arrangement for you to pick it up in time to meet your printer's deadline. You never picked up the transcript. You simply printed from your own unedited copy. Consequently, the interview was full of mis-transcriptions of my words. You will also recall that I gave you a copy of David Schorr's drawing of Hannah Arendt, but instructed you to call him for his permission before using it in your newspaper. You did not call him.

Mr. Ely, you can surely understand that I am furious at your arrogance and high-handedness. You broke an agreement, to which Mr. Kumar was a witness, and you abused my cooperativeness. Furthermore, you betrayed the trust that was implicitly given you by the students upon whose funds you rely for producing Hermes.

I have been informed by the Dean of the College that I cannot prosecute this issue under the code of non-academic conduct. The student newspapers—rightly, I agree—are free to go about their business without legal accountability to the community. This means that your responsibility to respect agreements you make with members of the community is a matter of public trust. Your violation of this trust is grievous to me personally and harmful to the community. It is also sufficiently serious to make me suspect that your advocacy of a politics of non-sexist solidarity on the left is sheer hypocrisy.

I expect a public apology and will accept it. I will also hope that you take a lesson from this episode in a context where it will not cost you your job or very much of your reputation.

Elisabeth Young-Bruehl  
 Associate Professor of Letters

## Hermes

Editorial Collective and Staff for this issue

Mary Pupura  
 Pepe Newman  
 Matt Lyons  
 Steve Hubbel  
 John Ely  
 John Houck



*Hermes* is a biweekly publication of the Wesleyan Community. Deadlines for submission are the Monday one week before publication for articles, and Thursday of that week for announcements. Submissions should be typed double spaced on 8½" by 11" paper, and can be put in Hermes Box HH, handed to an editor, or put in the submission envelope on the door of the Hermes office [second floor, Housing office]. Staff meetings for an issue are on Monday at 8:00 at night for planning, Thursday night at 8:00 for organization, and Sunday afternoon at 1:00 for layout. Our next meeting is Monday, Oct. 5th.

Response to Elizabeth Young-Bruehl's open letter:

As a member of the Hermes collective whose negligent behavior is responsible for this mishap, I should like to apologize to Elizabeth Young-Bruehl, David Schorr, and the rest of the Hermes staff. The circumstances which Ms. Young-Bruehl describes above do not, and have never characterized Hermes editorial policy, which is to go over carefully all editorial changes in any piece with the person who submitted it.

I should not wish my failure to have followed such a procedure to be viewed as malicious, arrogant or high-handed, but rather as an example of inexcusable forgetfulness. Having discussed over the telephone a number of changes which were to be made, I completely forgot about picking up the second transcript. If this negligence is enough to make Hermes suspect for hypocritical advocacy of non-sexist solidarity on the left, then the hypocrisy, in this case, reflects my failure—not that of Hermes.

JOHN ELY



Hermes wishes to apologize to Jonathan Vander Els for misspelling his name in the letters section of the Nov. 24th issue.

# Bureau-Tech Death

by Matthew Lyons

## Violence Made Palatable

The United States military services—perhaps the most destructively powerful organizations in the history of the world—greatly obscure their own violence. The services have been very busy overseas since World War II and have disguised the true nature of their activities from the public and from their own members. This deception takes two forms. Wars (or “police actions”)—such as those in Greece 1948, Korea 1950–53, Lebanon 1958, the Dominican Republic 1965, and of course Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos—are legitimized with various forms of Cold War propaganda—cries of Communism, conspiracy, patriotic rhetoric, distortions, false assumptions, and outright lies. Propaganda of this sort is nothing new.

With the development of the modern war machine, its violence has not only been “justified”, but also increasingly hidden from those who participate in it, making it more palatable. This deception is not consciously manipulated but is inherent in the structure of the war machine itself. In particular, it lies in modern war technology and in the military bureaucracy.

Over history, military technology has become more “effective” in at least two ways. Obviously, weapons have become more powerful, but they have also increasingly removed killer from victim—both physically and psychologically. Up until a few hundred years ago, most combat was hand-to-hand. Those few weapons—such as the catapult and the longbow—which could be used at a distance were limited to an effective range of a few hundred yards or less. For the most part, soldiers could not avoid seeing the results of their violence. With the scientific and industrial revolutions, however, came the development of firearms. Artillery, muskets and rifles were not only more powerful than previous weapons, but also had far superior range. Opponents were now not quite as visible to each other as they had once been...

Twentieth century weapons, such as the machine gun and the airplane, carried the trend much further. Those who have seen the film *Hearts and Minds* will probably remember interviews with former Air Force pilots who described their bombing missions over civilian areas in Vietnam. For them, these attacks were simply technical exercises. They got satisfaction from dropping their bombs on target and enjoyed the thrill of avoiding anti-aircraft fire. They hardly thought about the people whom they were wounding and killing, the houses they were levelling, the crops they were destroying. These realities were abstractions to them; they could not see, feel, or touch them.

Nuclear weapons are the most “advanced” product of both trends. In both their destructive power and the range over which they can be used, they mark a qualitative leap beyond all previous weapons. One Poseidon submarine, for example—a ten year-old weapons system now in the shadow of the more powerful Trident sub—has a destructive potential equivalent to all bombs used in World War II. That is only a small fraction of the U.S. nuclear arsenal. An intercontinental ballistic missile’s range, such as that of the Minuteman III or the MX, is up to 9000 miles. At such a distance, the physical and psychological separation of killer and victim is far greater than ever before.

In theory, the President is the man in this country who is responsible for launching nuclear weapons. To do so, he would simply convey the proper coded instructions to the military, perhaps never having to see the consequences. Roger Fisher, Professor of Law at Harvard, once proposed a way to counteract the tremendous psychological distances involved in this action. Fisher suggested that the codes necessary to launch the missiles be implanted in a capsule next to the heart of a volunteer who would accompany the President. The volunteer would also carry a large butcher knife.

Feiffer



If ever the President wanted to fire nuclear weapons, the only way he could do so would be for him first, with his own hands, to kill one human being. The President says, “George, I’m sorry but tens of millions must die.” He has to look at someone and realize what death is...what an innocent death is...

When I suggested this to friends at the Pentagon they said, “My God, that’s terrible. Having to kill someone would distort the President’s judgement. He might never push the button.” (*The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, March, ‘81.)

Another trend which has helped to hide the violence of war is the rise of the military bureaucracy. Bureaucracies have existed for thousands of years and first arose together with armies, but only comparatively recently have they become integrated with military forces. Until about the nineteenth century, most armies and navies were relatively autonomous, with most of the chain of command existing “in the field”. But with the return of large standing armies and the development of ever more sophisticated military technology, soldiers and officers were joined increasingly by professional bureaucrats engaged in administrative logistics and planning.

Although many of the characteristics of a bureaucracy which help to obscure violence were already present in military forces, they are now much more developed. Bureaucratization means mechanical, unthinking obedience in pursuit of organizational goals

and missions. It means specialization of tasks and fragmentation of information. It means that military planning is separated from combat much more than before. As a result, planning comes to be viewed as merely a series of technical or bureaucratic problems with little regard for the assumptions underlying them—or for their consequences. The military and civilian strategists during the Vietnam War who planned the search and destroy missions, the “Phoenix” program under which 40,000 civilians were murdered, and the massive bombing of North Vietnam, could psychologically “afford” to pursue policies that they even suspected were impotent, not fully realizing the tremendous suffering which they caused.

In an article entitled “The bureaucratization of homicide,” Henry T. Nash, a former Air Force intelligence analyst, described several ways in which military bureaucrats avoid the unpleasant subject of war:

During a NATO war game, I remember the surprise expressed by an Air Force colonel when he was informed of the number of casualties that resulted from his striking an “enemy” urban center with a one-megaton weapon. It took the simulated reality of a war game to bring home the human dimensions of this act. The colonel quickly regained his composure, reassuring himself that this was, after all, only a game. (*The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, March, ‘81)

And they can keep on thinking of it as a game until it actually happens! Or even more frightening, they can put their “game” on automatic pilot and remove themselves one step further from the actual killing. The Air Force is now developing a Launch-on-Warning system which would put computers in control of the decision to fire U.S. missiles in the face of an apparent Soviet nuclear attack—three minutes after the “attack” is detected.

Another important way in which the military bureaucracy obscures violence is through its “Defense”-Department language, *glowing over the true nature* of war. For example, Nash note a few of the terms which were developed during the Vietnam War:

Targets for attack were given the picturesque name of “strategic hamlets.” Bombing raids became “surgical strikes” and the forced movement and impounding of Vietnamese citizens were part of America’s “pacification program”—terms suggesting images of the hospital operating room or a Quaker meeting. (See last citation.)

Because military planners do not participate in the actual process of killing, they are able to deny their share of responsibility for military violence. The soldiers who do the killing can in turn deny their responsibility, saying that they are only following orders. (See Edgar Z. Friedenberg’s article, “The Privilege of Violence,” in *Ramparts*, August/September, 1975.)

Modern war technology and bureaucracy both contribute to the military’s mechanization of life. People’s actions are progressively reduced to mechanical tasks which hide their own immorality. On a deeper level, this mechanization masks not only violence, but also the military system of obedience and authority. For subordinates, mechanization means the surrender of spontaneity, independent thought, and true moral commitment in favor of behavior imposed from above. This phenomenon did not originate with airplanes or missiles or computer war games—although they exacerbate it—it is essential to the operation of the military.

What is most frightening is the pervasive effect of this trend throughout society. Factory and office work is highly specialized, mechanical and boring; fragmented information, punishments, and rewards pass for “teaching” in traditional schools; product standardization and advertising manipulate “consumer” choices—all of these trends reflect the same mindless fragmentation that characterizes the soldier or military bureaucrat. ■



# Men's Stories

Men.

Man.

Man-ia.

Man-datory man-ipulation and man-agement.

Man-ifold man-gling

of earth.

Earth: a round word

encircling us all.

Inserting and enspiralling us round and wound—

a round wound whirl in the world

Whirled we are found

here in a world

whose word-world

loses us where

words wander

un-wonderingly

man-ning meaning.

Meaning men man nature masterfully masturbating meaning into

morasses of round wounds.

(more ass)

Wounded worlds around us roundly renounce man's

meaning while,

Waiting to wonder,  
I watch.

Man-fully, man fully works wonders of waste and want,

not wanting to watch

the wonder of the earth.

Not waiting to want

the world wontonly won.

But once we wanted to whirl as one.

One whirled—not won.

The world cannot be won.

World is one.

— in many

and many in one.

Man-y men to run it run from it —

Run round and round

Until wound down

And wound up.

Wounded men wooing earth woefully.

Woo-men and woe-men.

Whoa-man.

Seth Mirsky, 11/11/81



## Book Review

Susan Griffin's

# Pornography and Silence

Culture's Revenge Against Nature

**Book Review:**

Susan Griffin's *Pornography and Silence: Culture's Revenge Against Nature* Harper and Row, New York, 1981. \$12.95 in hardback.

By John Ely

I have a great sense of ambivalence about "reviewing" Susan Griffin's book. Generally, I would consider a man to be completely out of place reviewing a feminist work. However, this book is different in many respects. When I am reading a deeply separative piece of feminism, such as Mary Daly's books, Adrienne Rich's essays, or Sally Gearhart's utopia *The Wanderground*, I feel a clear sense of intrusion, as a man, into something that isn't written for me. Of course, this is a very important aspect of what a man can learn from such writing. But to presume to review such a book would be inappropriate at the least. I think this could also be true of Susan Griffin's other recent book, *Woman and Nature*. So why does *Pornography and Silence* make an exception of itself?

This is a very upsetting book for anyone to read, answering this question is not easy. It is not surprising that after 5,000 years of pornographic culture, women have made the critical studies of pornography (and rape). When I read this book, I found many deeply sensitive and thoughtful observations about pornography; I also found much that was perhaps a bit naive, parts that didn't quite ring true. But this self-recognition made me feel disgusted and terrified with myself. I'm reminded of remarks that Susan Griffin made in a talk she gave on pornography while she was writing this book, remarks concerning her first encounters with pornographic material. As she writes in *Pornography and Silence*,

A woman's mind ought to be surprised by pornography, for most women do not read pornography. We do not even enter these places or neighborhoods where it is sold. Still, when we first see these images, these myths, this language, we are shocked only by a shock of recognition. We knew all these attitudes before... (p.3) Yet while the shock of recognition that a woman has when she makes a conscious study of pornography is not new, it is not the same knowledge which a man (or at least my experience as a man) has of it. Where Susan Griffin recognizes the manner with which pornographic culture has insidiously shaped her consciousness, my reaction is to the manner in which my consciousness was shaped by pornography itself. The most upsetting response I had to this book, and to other feminist studies of pornography, is that I found myself correcting many of Susan Griffin's observations from personal experience. For while Susan Griffin was experiencing actual pornography for the first time, it had been a formative part of my adolescent sexual development. I retained a tremendous number of memories that supported her observations or corrected points which I felt she had misinterpreted. After reading it, I had filled the margins with notes I wasn't sure I wanted other people to see. (And there were a lot of thoughts which I didn't write down, because I was too afraid of them. I had either kept the pencil from the page or kept my thoughts from associating too deeply.) It was an extremely upsetting experience. The book was very soul searching. As a man, I could not read it honestly without working out a reconstruction of my own sexual history. But it would be a bit self-indulgent in a book review, and

besides, I'm not prepared to at the moment—something for more discussion in my men's group and a later essay.

These are personal reasons why I think it is appropriate for a man as well as a woman to write about this book; they complement many pressing social reasons. I know I'm not the first man, for instance, who has picked up a copy of *Take Back the Night* (a new anthology on pornography), flipped through the table of contents, and turned immediately to Andrea Dworkin's essay entitled "Why So-Called Radical Men Need and Love Pornography." Whether or not I still "need and love" pornography, I'm not sure; but it is certainly a huge part of men's lives here at Wesleyan. Pornography is here and everywhere we men are, whether it be among men drinking beer and watching football in a smoke-filled room, life-size "pin-up dolls" on the walls, or on the cover of a Hustler magazine blowing around in the grass by the dumpster behind Chi Psi, or in the college store or upside down beside my friend's bed. Just walk down the hallway of an all male dorm or fraternity and look at the images on the walls. Pornography pervades male culture here as elsewhere. As Susan Griffin observes in her book, "in 1977, pornographic films earned 4 billion dollars, as much as conventional films and the entire music industry combined." (p. 249)

the closet" for many men means laying one's sick fantasies and pornographic secrets down on the table.

But what is pornographic culture? With this question in mind, perhaps I can move from a prefatory justification to look at the context of Susan Griffin's book. Like the name "patriarchy", the idea of a pornographic culture has great power within the feminist movement, but is perceived from without as a "buzz-word", an "unsubstantiated abstraction", or a problem of "minor significance." Needless to say, this is how men reviewed *Pornography and Silence* in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. More defensive silence. I found it both uninformed and contemptuous. Susan Griffin has made a perceptive attempt to deal with the most profound issues. The subtitle itself is indicative: "culture's revenge against nature." This marks the phantom of western thought. From the crucial rejection of nature by Socrates during his trial (*Apology*, 18-19) to the conceptual pussy-footing of thinkers as 'divergent' as Claude Levi-Strauss and Jürgen Habermas<sup>1</sup>, the schism between the "objective" and the "subjective", nature and culture, physis and nomos or technē has been at the vortex of western thought. And the men whose thought forms the rationalization for their patriarchy consistently try to distort, veil or otherwise ignore this central issue. As Susan Griffin points out, the attempt to separate these two conceptual categories is neurotic,

Perhaps I state the obvious, but its obviousness was much more disturbing to me after finishing this book. For only a minority of women have looked critically and honestly at the implications of pornography; just bringing up the issue is difficult. As Robin Morgan explains in *Going Too Far*:

The apocryphal goes like this: At one of the earliest conferences of this feminist wave, during the late 1960's, a curious confrontation-and-avoidance maneuver was executed in the workshop on sexuality. About eight women were gathered together in the room, and the discussion had been open, supportive, warm, and truly consciousness-raising. During a lull, one woman ventured in a quavering voice, "I wonder, uh, could we maybe discuss—I mean, it's odd, as feminists, I know, but uh...well, I, um, sometimes have these sexual fantasies which are kind of, uh, masochistic, and...I well, wondered if anyone else here had that experience. Uh...maybe they could just raise their hands if they did, or...maybe we could figure out what it meant, uh, I mean..." She trailed off. A thundering hush ensued. Then, slowly, every woman in the room, one by one, raised her hand. This pantomime, performed in complete silence, was followed by yet another more prolonged stillness, which in turn was broken by some hearty comment on an unrelated subject. Everyone's relief was palpable. The subject of fantasies—particularly such fantasies—was dropped, and rarely has been picked up again in the Woman's Movement until. (Vintage, 1978, p. 227)

I have yet to see any man write as honestly as Robin Morgan has here. Yet it is men in particular who need to open up and deal honestly with these issues. We don't. For while we are the perpetrators of pornographic culture, we have yet to be self-critical. Men's social "scientific" studies of pornography are a sick joke. (See for example Kathleen Barry's *Female Sexual Slavery*, Avon, 1979, p. 233-48) And all I ever hear from those men, including myself, who are not disembodied sociologists is a defensive silence. Perhaps some men will respond openly to these issues in a public space such as the letters section of *Hermes*? After all, we have only monopolized the "public sphere" for our "heroic" warfare and our "epic", "civilized" destructiveness for the last 5,000 years or more. Coming "out of

alienated and deluded; it is also the fundamental pivot of what Murray Bookchin calls the western "epistemology of rule," the ideology of hierarchical society from Sumerian "civilization" on.

Susan Griffin helps dissolve this tissue of lies in a number of novel ways. Her book is a tapestry—an inter-causal net of male racism, anti-semitism, pornographic images, rape, unlimited terror, sadistic torture, and the most necrophilic thought and action that characterizes the carefully denied underbelly of western civilization. Her book affirms what Walter Benjamin observed in the 1930's: "There is no document of civilization which is not also a document of barbarity." And thus every major statement Griffin makes concerning the character of pornography also serves as a theses statement on Western theology and philosophy. One by one, she identifies pornographic archetypes with the major themes of the most prominent male figures: Socrates, Aristotle, St. Paul, St. Augustine, Francis Bacon, Alexander Pope, Milton, Shopenhauer, Hegel, Balzac, Nietzsche, D. H. Lawrence, and William Faulkner. The documentation of such themes in *Pornography and Silence* rests on the even more substantial citations and references to these themes in *Woman and Nature*.

The "metaphysics of Christianity", she asserts, "and the metaphysics of pornography are the same." (p. 3) The schizoid character of Western theology—(pure virginity/absolute whoredom and debauchery), celibacy and goodness/carnal sex and destruction—is also the essence of pornography. And the two are notoriously tied together, from the *Malteus Malificarum* to the locked drawers of Paul Tillich's desk.<sup>2</sup> Elsewhere, she points out that the pornographer always demands "biblical justice" (p. 60); or she observes that "in the pornographic drama of the virgin and the whore, we discover the old religious definition of the sexual act." (p. 22)

The extent to which what Griffin calls the "pornographic mind" is in many ways the Western concept of mind itself—the male philosophic mind—is perhaps even more disturbing, although she develops this theme less explicitly. "The pornographic mind," she writes, "would separate culture from nature. It would desacralize matter. Pornography's revenge against

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## Griffin

Continued from page 5

nature is precisely to deprive matter of spirit." (p. 49) This is also the predominant strain of Western thought from Socrates' deliberate rejection of nature philosophy to what Weber called the "disenchantment of the world" in the 20th century. Hans Jonas, in his book *The Phenomenon of Life*, has traced this gradual development of what he calls an "ontology of death," as has Susan Griffin in her earlier *Woman and Nature*.

The combination of fear, hatred and instrumentalization of non-human nature (along with the "beasts" and the "body") that Griffin observes is an integral and recurrent element of pornography (p. 3, 23, 24, 26, 40, 70, 130, 228) is also consistently recurrent in the "great minds" of the West, including Greek Philosophy, Descartes, Bacon, Hegel, Marx and Sigmund Freud. The relationship between sado-masochism and female non-being, and the successive destruction of female subjectivity from a thinking/feeling person to a mute, bodily extension of a male ego and then to a mutilated corpse of life-less privation is the basic theme of the most prominent pornography from DeSade to the Story of O.<sup>3</sup> But this is simply an inversion of the major philosophical systems of the West. From Plato and Aristotle to Hegel, conceptual systems begin with material non-being which is consciously associated with woman; they then move to a conception of alienated or "embodied" "man" who must wrestle with necessity, fate and the "blind forces of nature" ("...in the pornographic mind," Griffin writes, "woman is nature. She represents natural fate.") p.89) Finally, they move to a completely spiritualized, non-material conception of pure knowledge or male reason which is complete in itself and merely hides the material world, which itself always remains immaterial, oppressed and "feminine."<sup>4</sup>

Susan Griffin recognizes that this is a gross distortion of actual existence, and her critique of the pornographic mind is also a critique of the patriarchal conception of reason. "She [the "woman/nature" in the mind of the pornographer] does not stand for the absence of knowledge, the way we might suppose. She stands instead for a lie." (p. 23) Philosophy is built upon a similar lie, namely that it's central conflict is that between the philosopher (as the most substantial embodiment of pure reason) and the city.<sup>5</sup> As Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno observe, under an epistemology of rule, "what is done to all by the few, always occurs as the subjection of individuals by the many: social repression always exhibits the mask of repression by a collective." (*Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 1972, p. 22) Socrates' glorious victory and death is an ideological red herring; with it he "elevated loyalty to the laws of the stated above all else." (Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, 1947, p. 22; note the hierarchical metaphor.) For domination of nature, the precondition for philosophy (Aristotle, Met. Bk. I, ch. 1), necessarily yields the domination of humanity:

...the more all nature is looked upon as 'quite a mess of miscellaneous stuff', as mere objects in relation to human subjects, the more is the once supposedly autonomous subject emptied of any content, until it finally becomes a mere name with nothing to

denominate. The total transformation of each and every realm of being into a field of means leads to the liquidation of the subject who is supposed to use them... the individual, purified of all remnants of mythologies, including the mythology of objective reason, reacts automatically, according to general patterns of adaptation. Economic and social forces take on the character of blind natural powers that man [sic], in order to preserve himself, must dominate by adjusting himself to them. As the end result of this process, we have on the one hand, the self, the abstract ego emptied of all substance except its attempt to transform everything in heaven and on earth into means for its preservation, and on the other hand an empty nature degraded to mere material, mere stuff to be dominated, without any other purpose than that of this very domination. (Horkheimer, op cit, p.93,97)

But this dialectic of enlightenment is a pornographic experience, and Susan Griffin also identifies it; as such pornography coincides with the male conception of reason. For when man's pornographic mind attempts to reduce "nature/woman" to muteness or death:

"he puts himself in a cul-de-sac. For images and metaphors are, of necessity, wrought from reality. They always imitate the natural. They remind us exactly of what we are trying to avoid... in this war of images[i.e. of material reality], the pornographer finds himself in a terrible dilemma... For by the very images he has created to humiliate nature, he recalls nature to his consciousness... The image of a woman's body which he uses to contain and punish his rage against nature has a certain power, therefore, in his mind. This image he has wrought to humiliate nature now works a power over him. He is overcome once more. Vanquished once more. Nature is like a many headed dragon. For every head he cuts off, more heads grow. And now the very device, the very image he uses to silence nature rises to speak to him." (p. 40, 67)

Here Susan Griffin not only recognizes the same cycle of domination that Horkheimer and Adorno did, but she also adds a new dimension to it.<sup>6</sup> Nor is she afraid, as they were, to develop a new attitude of reconciliation between nature and culture; this leads her outside the western tradition to Tantric Buddhism, to the paganism of the native american peoples, and to her own particular style of animism (p. 71-2 and *Woman and Nature*, 1978, p. 217-27) But Susan Griffin does not stop with such reflection. An anarchistic pagan consciousness is a beautiful thing, but asserting its beauty begs a focal question: why does such a beautiful idea consistently fail to correspond with reality? Like Freud, the men of the Institute for Social Research ended on a pessimistic note. Susan Griffin, however, seeks to move beyond such arguments. And this leads her to some of the more interesting and problematic aspects of her book. Like Jessica Benjamin, whose work consciously begins with a critique of the Frankfurt School (7), and Dorothy Dinnerstein, who seems to have arrived at a similar (and better developed) argument independent of them,<sup>8</sup> Griffin seeks roots to this problem in the mothering relationship. This attempt comprises the center section of her book; and this is the portion I found least adequate. Arguments that attempt to find

the origins of instrumental rationality -- that "male bourgeois who," as Ynestra King puts it, "crawled out of the slime to be lord and master of everything"<sup>9</sup> -- in the mothering relationship are perhaps the most intriguing and the most promising theoretical contributions of modern feminism. But they still remain rather consciously ahistorical,<sup>10</sup> and fail to give the family and the "mother/son/mother/daughter" dynamic the historical context it requires to become concrete and grounded. The discussion of these modal points in *Pornography and Silence* has these same problems; like much psychoanalytically based critique, it makes many logical leaps that lose me, and it fails to look at historically changing mothering relationships and their relationship to changing forms of human domination.

At times, Susan Griffin's discussion of the categories of "culture" and "nature" encounters similar problems. Frequently, there is not enough historical description underlying or dialectical mediation between the two terms. If the ambiguities of the western experience have shown anything, it is that "nature" and "culture" have a tremendous ideological impact, and Griffin frequently loses this component.<sup>11</sup> Nonetheless, this is a very powerful and beautiful book, and stands as a tremendous attempt to seek the answer to these basic questions, both in the "world-historical", theoretical sense which I have tried to point out here, and in the more "personal" ways I briefly touched upon earlier. It is difficult to read without seeing it from both these perspectives. If on the one hand, much historical elucidation is required to fill it out with respect to the "theoretical aspect", more honesty and openness on the part of men (including myself) is needed to help work on the "personal" aspect. In any case, for both projects, *Pornography and Silence* will be an extremely valuable companion.■

### Notes :

<sup>1</sup>Levi-Strauss' neo-Kantian schism between nature and culture is as well-known as his misogyny. Jürgen Habermas is a more difficult box of cracker-jacks with the same prize at the bottom. On his neo-Kantianism, see the works of his mentors, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, whose critique is far less well known. See also "Ecology and Critical Theory" by Vincent Dinorci and "The Concept of Nature in Habermas" by Joal Whitebook in *Telos* no. 22 and no. 40 respectively. And on his patent ignorance of feminism, see an interview with him in *Telos*, no. 39, p. 165.

<sup>2</sup>With regard to the *Malleus Malificarum*, Griffin writes:

*The Monks who wrote the Malleus Maleficarum as the doctrinal justification for witch-burning clearly created their descriptions of the ideas and acts of witches out of their own psyches, and minds, they as freely moved from victim to torturer as did De Sade in his trials of cruelty* (p. 18)

<sup>3</sup>And on Paul Tillich, I quote from Mary Daly:

*I suggest that theologians have always fantasized a female hanging on the cross. Hannah Tillich, in her lucid autobiography, From Time to Time, describes the pornographic exploits of her husband, the famous theologian. She describes entering his room during his showing of a porn film for his own private entertainment: "There was the familiar cross shooting up the wall... A naked girl hung on it, hands tied in front of her private parts... More and more crosses appeared, all with women tied and exposed in various positions. Some were exposed from the front, some from the side, some from behind, some crouched in a fetal position, some head down, or legs apart, or legs crossed — always whips, crosses, and whips."* (Gyn/Ecology, p. 94: 1978)

<sup>4</sup>It is crucial to see that the "bestialization" and the "domestication of women by men is a crucial component of this, a point Griffin makes with regard to Sade and the *Story of O*; it also figures prominently in such recent movies about these issues such as the "Last Tango in Paris" and "Swept Away". In both cases a woman who "clearly desires" to act like an animal and must be "tamed" forms a crucial moment in the sado-masochistic events that transpire.

<sup>5</sup>In the case of Plato and Aristotle, this metaphysical structure remains essentially fixed in cyclical motion while Hegel places it in a historical context. Slightly different, but equally valid arguments could be made in the case of Descartes, Bacon and Marx. Sigmund Freud's fear and hatred of nature is simply neurotic, as in the opening pages to *The Future of an Illusion*.

<sup>6</sup>Cf. Sheldon Wolin's *Politics and Vision*, New York, 1960, p.37, p.28-30.

<sup>7</sup>A dimension that Horkheimer and Adorno were not unaware of, however. The third section of their *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is a line by line comparison of the French and German Enlightenment with the works of the Marquis de Sade.

<sup>8</sup>See her "The Bonds of Love: Rational Violence and Erotic Domination" in *Feminist Studies*, vol. 6, no. 1; and "Authority and the Family Revisited: or, a World Without Fathers," *New German Critique*, vol. 4, no.3.

<sup>9</sup>See *The Mermaid and the Minotaur*, New York, 1976.

<sup>10</sup>"Feminism and the Revolt of Nature" in *Heresies*, vol. 4, no. 1, p.14.

<sup>11</sup>Both Jessica Benjamin and Dorothy Dinnerstein suggest that more historical and anthropological work should go into the arguments they develop.

<sup>12</sup>One of the best discussions of these problems is in Susan Buck-Morss' study of Adorno, *The Origin of the Negative Dialectic*, New York, 1977, p. 43-62.

## Hmmmm...

The November 1981 issue of *El Salvador Report* charges that right wing paramilitary death squads in Guatemala and pre-Sandinista Nicaragua received large shipments of powerful amphetamines. A 1979 wiretap of conversations within the regime of Anastasio Somoza uncovered a modern-day "French Connection" of pep pills destined for the brutal Nicaraguan National Guard, from an unnamed "supplier" in Miami, Florida. The seasoned observer cannot help but assume that El Salvadorean Death Squads are the new beneficiaries of the dried up Nicaraguan market.

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— Marilyn Woodsea, Plexus

# For Every Non-Registrant's Information

This Fall the inJustice Department announced 'guidelines' for identifying a prosecuting "willful non-registrants"—those of us who have turned ourselves in to the government. They have a list of some 151 names, mostly "willful non-registrants", but probably including a few 72 year-old grandmothers and others who told the Selective Service they had not registered, but 'forgot' to say they were not supposed to.

In 30 of these cases the inJustice Department is ready to bring indictments. Warning letters have been sent threatening prosecution and evidence has been collected proving that these public resisters do indeed exist, and are men of registration age. Several Grand Jury indictments were to be handed down this week, but on Wednesday the inJustice Department ordered United States Attorneys not to begin prosecution until the Reagan administration announces if it is continuing draft registration. This decision may be coming soon.

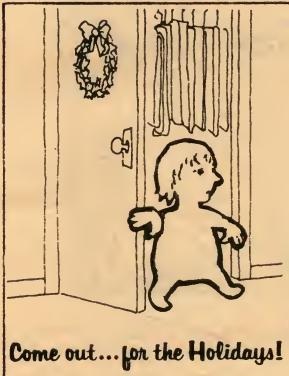
Things are now firmly in Reagan's lap. Cases are ready for prosecution and he will have to decide whether or not to go ahead with draft registration and prosecution. This is further complicated by the report of the Presidential Commission on Manpower (sic) and Conscription which was made this month or next, possibly next week.

This report could make an outright recommendation for a draft. More likely it will detail a plan to upgrade the "All Volunteer" military, with the understanding that if certain goals are not met, then other measures (i.e. a draft) will be necessary. (At the moment rising unemployment is driving people into the military for survival.) This would shift the argument in the press and Congress away from "Should we have a draft at all?" to "Under what conditions should we have a draft?" If Reagan could do this, and his is a damn slick politician, he could maybe get a draft bill passed if he called for it, especially with a convenient excuse such as Libyan or Cuban "aggression". Meanwhile the Selective Service (the SS) and the inJustice Department are going ahead with everything short of indictments, and a new round of warning letters to public non-registrants was mailed December 4th.

We need to keep the heat on Reagan. The prosecutions that were planned to begin this week have been postponed in part because of the unexpectedly effective mobilization of anti-draft and anti-war groups. The government knows that if they do prosecute, they will have a fight on their hands. Watch the news during break. If indictments or arrests do occur, or if a draft is called for, there will be local and national protests at Federal Courthouses and elsewhere. Get in touch with your local anti-draft group to find out what's happening near you.

*Have a happy winter solstice!*

—Russ Ford 12/11/81



Letter



Dear Editors

I am writing to clarify some issues in the letter from Floating Eagle Feather published in Friday, December 11 issue of the Argus. (I'm writing in the Hermes because the Argus won't be out again until after break.)

Although I agree with much of what Floating Eagle Feather wrote, there were a few points in his letter about why the SEC didn't fund him that were mistaken (perhaps due to my explanations to him). As they are delicate issues, they need to be pointed out.

1) Floating Eagle Feather's funding was first not guaranteed and then cut as he wrote in his letter. We had discussed his coming, but funding hadn't been confirmed.

2) The decision not to fund Floating Eagle Feather shouldn't be attributed to racism. What did occur, which affected the decision, was a readjustment of priorities, spurred by the Student Budget Committee's 'stipulations,' towards directing our money to more 'big name speakers' and supposedly to a more politically 'balanced' slate of speakers (General Westmoreland as a balancer to Bobby Muller and Ntsoake Shange and Bert Garschoff, somehow or other). However you may look at that decision (personally I think it's highly questionable, but we make our decisions by the vote of the majority), it is clear that the decision not to fund Floating Eagle Feather wasn't a question of racism. It is however, a certain comment of the prevailing mood at our school, and in the country, that Floating Eagle Feather was forced to feel on the defensive and interpret the situation that way.

KAMALA GOLDBERG

\*\*\*As a note to the groups that did fund his visit: the \$200 we got together not only funded Eagle Feather's two performances at Wesleyan, he also did shows at two hospitals and at Russell Library in Middletown, and at a pre-school and a teenage home in New Haven. ■

Hermes, Wednesday, Dec. 16th, page 7

## S a a g

by Julie Croston

The Wesleyan South African Action Group ended the fall semester with plans for a February 6 All-Campus SAAG Orientation and a renewed commitment to urging the Board of Trustees to divest from corporations with South African interests.

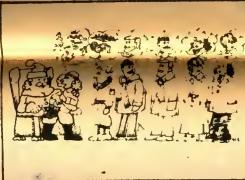
The February 6 presentation will include updates by SAAG members on American corporate investment, American foreign policy concerning South Africa, Wesleyan investment in South Africa, the contemporary situation in South Africa. In addition, a short film will be shown and materials for letter-writing to Wesleyan trustees and Congress will be provided.

The letter-writing campaign, which began in September, is crucial to SAAG's goals. Students and faculty are asked to write to trustees in support of

divestment from corporations having South African ties. The effect of these letters was evident at the November trustee's meeting, at which many trustees mentioned receiving letters. Their awareness of student opposition to South African investment represents a substantial gain for SAAG's goal this year.

Another event for the coming semester will be the All-African Weekend, co-sponsored by the Wesleyan African Studies Program and Ujamma. This educational and cultural celebration will take place at Wesleyan in March.

Meanwhile, more letters to trustees are needed before their February meeting. If you would like to write a letter, call 347-5286 (Human Rights House) for addresses and additional information. ■



July, 1981. Hottingen, West Germany

*She asks me, Why can't they go away? They all are NATO's blessings.  
I answer.*

*She shudders,*

*today I trembled at the planes  
—flew too close to my heart—  
pressing down  
overhead, crossing the sky,  
two green ones with pilots I could see,  
then a large pair of jets, then three,  
kept screaming, so close, I screamed back,  
WHY CAN'T YOU HEAR ME?*

*She laughs, then shudders, and moves in close to me  
today my nerves spoke aloud  
quicken, blinking too fast  
and something in me passed  
on to my hands, because one hand cramped  
and when I held it, hurting,  
and it was like plaster, stiff  
anger was inside of it!*

*She breathes, then again*



*tonight I smelled five scents of cow dung  
I saw the sharpness of small stars in the sky  
crushed weeds and earth in clumps underneath my feet,  
and tasted the airplane's drone in my mouth,  
when I looked up.  
I looked up to cry,  
they don't know about me!*

—Kari Friedman

July, 1981. Hottingen, West Germany

# NESTLE'S \$ 100,000 BAR

BRUNNER'S WORLD: THE FORMULA

She is the Queen of the Hazelnut Supreme  
She splashes out from the jerk of their sanguine spigots  
Her hands bleed with the sperm of cacao  
and the worms of her children.

They build worm castles in the green mud  
They are the big-bellied Kings of WormCastles  
They drive the white Mercedes with sticks  
They drink the wine of river water and Simulac  
They eat the steak of cornmeal mush

She brings chocolate to the four corners of the earth  
She survives on the specie of starvation

-Julie Croston

